

"Encoded Archival Standards Update" (2020-04-17). A webinar hosted by TS-EAS

Question and answer summary

How does the EAD standard relate to ArchivesSpace (and platforms such ArchivesSpace)? How do the revisions impact export functionality?

ArchivesSpace does adhere to the EAD Version 2002 standard, for importing and exporting data. It is using EAD as an exchange format. A few years ago, one of our colleagues on TS-EAS, Noah Huffman at Duke University, and also Trevor Thornton at North Carolina State University, worked on ensuring that ArchivesSpace could export EAD3. So that is something ArchivesSpace can handle now. It always takes a little bit of time for tools to implement new standards, especially with major revisions. It is also undergoing an upgrade to accommodate the current version of EAC-CPF much more thoroughly than before. Cory Nimer, also from TS-EAS, worked on that quite a bit by creating a specification and aligning the tool with the standard itself. Another tool that does this really well is Artefactual's Access to Memory (AtoM); it sticks very closely to the EAD and EAC-CPF standards, and imports and exports those formats. They also have built into their database model a set of functions, even though we don't have a schema available for functions.

Do you have the ambition to provide more detailed requirements in EAD for describing digital records?

You can describe digital records using EAD, including adding links to files and including metadata. For specific file-level metadata, you might also consider another metadata standard -- and linking to it from the finding aid. In general, we're trying to keep EAD closely aligned with ISAD-G in describing records, and not focus too much on a digital (vs. non-digital) aspect of the records. This is of course open for community discussion, especially with the next major revision of EAD.

What sort of interoperability will there be between EAD, EAC-CPF, and RiC?

EAD and EAC-CPF are meant to be companion standards for transmitting archival information to other systems. Some examples where you can see these two work in concert are archival systems that incorporate both of these standards, such as Archives Portal Europe (<https://www.archivesportaleurope.net/>) and the Kalliope Union Catalog (<https://kalliope-verbund.info/en/about/history.html>). I don't think we have an example of this in the U.S. where these two standards have converged too much, aside from the Social Networks and Archival Context Project (<https://portal.snaccooperative.org/about>). Going to the SNAC Cooperative website you can browse archival information from the context of the archival creators, and a lot of that information has been pulled from EAD records. So there are actually some snippets of EAD data embedded in the SNAC EAC-CPF records. EAD and EAC-CPF are really meant to work hand in hand, and that's also why they are under the ICA umbrella in terms of their relation to ISAD(G) and ISAAR(CPF). Now RiC is both a conceptual model and an RDF ontology, though it is not yet in its final release version. The conceptual model brings together the other standards: ISAD(G), ISAAR(CPF), ISDF, and everything else into a single conceptual

model for describing things all together. The ontology itself will just be another serialization to transmit that data. In this case RiC serializations would be transmitted in a different format--not XML, but in the RDF (Resource Description Framework) data format.

For someone who codes in EAD but hasn't implemented EAC-CPF, how do these standards work together?

EAD is for the archival description, in which you have a small part where you can actually describe the creator. The EAD and EAC-CPF documents are then linked, with the EAD creator linking to EAC-CPF. In EAC-CPF the document links to the description of the archival materials in EAD.

What is the future of the EAS formats, and will they always be XML?

Right now the EAC-CPF major revision that is ongoing, and the deliverable for that work is an XML schema. That is how EAD3 was delivered as well. But if you look back, even in the early days of the development of EAC-CPF, there was the creation of the Toronto Tenets. One of those tenets is that the serialization format that we are using today--and right now that is as XML--doesn't have to be the only one. Of course now RiC is using RDF, so that will be another option in the future - . Archivists will be able to use the ICA standard ICA to encode in a non-XML data format. There's also lots of use of transferring data between systems. Some systems use other formats already. For example, ArchivesSpace uses JSON--which is just another serialization format in a different format than XML. Right now there is no EAD schema for JSON, in fact JSON schemas are still kind of a work in progress, but I expect in the future that there could be essentially a standardized format for encoding EAD or EAC-CPF or archival information in JSON.

What kinds of topics will you be covering in upcoming webinars?

We have a couple of webinars planned out. We looked at this one as an introduction to how the committee works and what it's responsible for. Future webinars will be focused more on the ongoing work of the committee--talking in more detail about the EAC-CPF revision and other work that's going on in the committee. We've also talked about doing a few tutorials. Those wouldn't be interactive, but pre-recorded information discussing the Github system, reporting issues or bugs. So all of that is coming, hopefully in the next few months.